

Fulbright Winners Study and Serve Abroad

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Just as Don Quixote set off on a search for adventure, three graduate students from Tulane are heading off to different corners of the world ? Spain, Malaysia and Indonesia ? as winners of Fulbright U.S. Student Program awards. They will participate in international assignments that will involve instituting an HIV testing and counseling program, founding a student newspaper and researching theatrical incarnations of the idealistic knight of La Mancha.



Nilda Rivera, left, and Joe Kanter, right, will spend the coming academic year in foreign countries as winners of Fulbright U.S. Student Program awards. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

Nilda Rivera will depart soon for a year in Spain. Rivera, who is pursuing a doctoral degree in Spanish, is studying Don Quixote, the main character in the groundbreaking novel written by Spanish author Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra in the early 1600s.

“I am studying theatrical plays to see if we can still call Don Quixote the paradigmatic icon of Hispanic culture, as an ideal in different communities,” says Rivera, a native of Puerto Rico.

Her research seeks to compare the character's portrayal in Latin America, Spain and Latino communities in the United States. The Fulbright funding will allow her to spend a year in Madrid and Barcelona.

With his Fulbright award, Joseph Kanter, who is pursuing a combined MD/MPH degree at Tulane, is taking a year off between his third and fourth years of medical school. He will be in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, for 10 months, working with an organization called the Malaysian AIDS Council. His project is launching HIV testing, counseling and treatment programs in clean-needle exchange clinics, in both urban and rural settings.

“Three-fourths of the HIV transmission [there] is through dirty needles,” says Kanter, of Palm Beach, Fla., who completed his undergraduate degree at Northwestern University in Chicago.



Melinda Ammann, who received a master's degree in international development from Tulane in December 2007, is heading to Indonesia to teach English and start a school newspaper. (Photo by Melissa Johnson)

"I have never been there, and I don't speak the language," says Kanter. Upon arriving in Kuala Lumpur, his first task will be locating an apartment in which to live. The adventure will help him define his career goals, he says.

Melinda Ammann, who received a master's degree in international development from Tulane in December 2007, is heading to Manado, North Sulawesi, Indonesia, as an English teaching assistant at a Catholic high school.

The Iowa University graduate, who hails from Marshalltown, Iowa, is looking forward to her Fulbright year on the island, where she plans to initiate publication of a bilingual student newspaper.

Much of the purpose of the Fulbright program is to develop cross-cultural relationships, and involvement in the local community is an important part.

Ammann hopes the bilingual newspaper will contribute to the sense of community spirit among students at the school, help them develop their language skills in

Bahasa Indonesia and English, and foster a free press in Indonesia.

“Democracy requires vigilant development of social institutions ? like free and critical media ? that support genuine and sustainable democracy,” Ammann says.

“Organizing a high school student newspaper strikes me as a great way to contribute, however modestly, to Indonesia's future as a free and democratic society. After all, my students will shape the country's future.”